

REMARKS

Claims 1 – 9 and 16 – 37 are pending, and in the Office Action dated November 16, 2006, Claims 1 – 9 and 16 – 37 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over web pages of www.decisionroom.com (DecisionRoom) in view of Krishnaswamy et al.(U.S. Patent No. 5,999,525), and further in view of “Managing Workgroups with Castle Rock SNMPc” (SNMPc). In addition, Claims 1 – 4, 16, 24, 32, 33, 35, and 37 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, as being vague and indefinite. In response, the Applicant has amended the independent claims to clarify that the authentication unit authenticates the equipment. With respect to the other noted 112 issues, the Applicant respectfully traverses the rejections. Specifically, each independent claim is directed to a unique system, having certain limitations. Whether the icons represent all users, some users, are added manually or dynamically is not necessarily pertinent to any specific claim. For example, in Claims 16 – 23 issues related to the attendance, authentication and display of the relevant icons are claimed in detail. For the other claims, these limitations are not believed to be required to define a unique system.

As illustrated in Figs. 1 and 2 of the present application, the present invention may join two separate conference rooms, each having “input electronic equipment” and “output electronic equipment.” As stated on page 24, the output equipment includes devices such as a projector 15, a GUI display device 16, a whiteboard 17a, and a printer device 18. The input equipment includes devices such as a 3D image input device 17 and a scanner device 17. These devices are under the control of the equipment management unit, which may be implemented as part of the conference room server 11.

As further illustrated in Figs. 5, 22, 23, 25 et al. and the descriptions thereof, the present invention provides visual icons corresponding to the available electronic equipment in each conference room. For example, in Fig. 5, icons corresponding to the whiteboard 17a, the 3D image input device 17 and the scanner device 19 are displayed as input equipment 64, and icons corresponding to the project device 15, the data display device 16 and the printer device 18 are displayed as output equipment 65. The teleconferencing system, the conference server 11 and the client PC, all present in the first conference room 10, are also displayed as icons. In addition, other equipment such as the portable projector 32 and the printer device 18, present in the second conference room 30, are displayed as icons (discussed in the present application, page 33, lines 4 – 12).

Thus, the present invention provides a system in which participants can quickly visually determine what equipment is available on the system for use with the teleconference. Each pending independent claim includes at least the following claim element: “displaying, as icons, the other attendant electronic equipment and the electronic equipment managed by the equipment management unit, wherein the other attendant electronic equipment icons are displayed to visually identify whether each respective attendant electronic equipment has been authenticated by the authentication unit.” This claim element specifically states that the display unit displays, as icons, the “equipment managed by the equipment management unit.” As discussed above, the equipment managed by the equipment management unit includes the input and output equipment. This limitation is not present in the cited references.

As understood by the applicants, the DecisionRoom article relates to a type on online “e-room” where participants can upload and comment on shared documents. However, such is system is not analogous to the networking conference system of the present invention. Specifically, an online “e-room” system does not provide output electronic equipment, such as projectors, whiteboards, etc.

More particularly, the present claims require an equipment management unit for managing the state of each electronic equipment connected to the network. There is no discussion in the DecisionRoom article of any need or desire to manage any other equipment on the network. Moreover, the Krishnaswamy reference fails to disclose an equipment management unit for managing the state of each electronic equipment. The citation to the Abstract simply does not support this rejection.

In addition, the Office Action has failed to particularly point out how the DecisionRoom system could be modified as suggested by the Office Action. Since the DecisionRoom system is apparently just an online website to share documents, it is not readily apparent how such a system could be modified as suggested, to include a equipment management unit, even assuming a reference disclosed such an equipment management unit.

As conceded in the Office Action, the hypothetical combination of the DecisionRoom system and Krishnaswamy still fails to disclose displaying icons of the attendant equipment and the equipment managed by the equipment management unit. The addition of the SNMPc article fails to overcome this deficiency, as the SNMPc reference discloses a system management program that is apparently utilized by system administrators. The SNMPc article fails to disclose that the attendant equipment and the

equipment managed by the equipment management unit could be recognized as icons. While the article does not disclose many details, it appears that it could perhaps detect addressable devices specifically connected to a network. However, the equipment managed by the equipment management unit could include whiteboards, projectors, television displays, etc. and these devices are not necessarily directly connected to a network, but may be connected, for example via a “hub” 12 (see pages 25 – 27 and Fig. 2). There is no teaching or suggestion in the SNMPC article that such devices could be displayed as icons, since these devices could not be detected by the management program.

Significantly, none of the cited references teaches or suggests the icons for the respective equipment are “displayed to visually identify whether each respective attendant electronic equipment has been authenticated by the authentication unit.” In other words, the icons for each of the equipment are displayed in a manner to visually identify which of the equipment have been authenticated, and which have not. This is illustrated, for example, in Fig. 4(A). This specific limitation is not present in any of the cited references. Thus, the present claims are allowable for at least this reason.

Moreover, the combination of references fails to disclose that each attendant electronic equipment acquires one of the authority to be a presenter terminal, the authority to be a chairman terminal and the authority to be an attendant terminal, as required by Claims 1, 2 and 3. The Office Action fails to cite specific support for the rejection of this limitation. Thus, these claims are allowable for at least this additional reason.

With respect to Claim 4, the limitation “wherein when the authority to be a chairman terminal is provided, the authentication unit obtains conference attendance requests including personal data related to the other attendant electronic equipment from the conference management server and prepares attendance permission information or attendance non-permission information for the other attendant electronic equipment in accordance with the operation by the user based on the personal data” is not taught or disclosed by the cited references. The combination of references fails to teach or suggest that one terminal can get the authority to be a chairman terminal. Therefore, Claim 4 is allowable for at least this additional reason.

With respect to Claim 16, the cited combination of references fails to teach or suggest “attendance management means for preparing an attendance information file for managing the plurality of attendant electronic equipment attending a conference by using the personal data and the result of attendance authentication obtained by the input/output means, and preparing attendant equipment display information for displaying, as an icon, the personal data of each attendant electronic equipment managed as the attendance information file in accordance with the result of attendance authentication.” While the Office Action cites the DecisionRoom article as supporting “authentication” because each user must log in, the reference does not teach or suggest that each equipment’s attendance is used to create an attendance information file by using personal data. Thus, Claim 16 is allowable for at least this additional reason.

With respect to Claim 24, the cited combination of references fails to teach or suggest “preparing an attendance information file for managing the plurality of attendant electronic equipment attending a conference by using the personal data and the result of

attendance authentication; and preparing attendant equipment display information for displaying, as an icon, the personal data of each attendant electronic equipment managed as the attendance information file in accordance with the result of attendance authentication.” Therefore, Claim 24 is allowable for at least this additional reason.

It is now believed that the present claims are in condition for allowance. If the Examiner believes that a telephone conference would expedite the processing of this application, the Examiner is requested to telephone the undersigned attorney at the below-listed number.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any fees (or credit any overpayment) associated with this communication and which may be required under 37 CFR §1.78 to Deposit Account No. 50-2603, referencing Attorney Docket No. 352738.00300. A duplicate sheet is attached.

Respectfully submitted,

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